

Washington State Board of Health Proposed Guidelines on Environmental Justice

PREAMBLE

Environmental Justice is fair and equal treatment under the law. Environmental Justice means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental and public health laws, regulations, policies, and research activities.

The Washington State Board of Health's Environmental Justice Committee recognizes the progress that many community organizations, businesses, industries, and agencies have made in reducing pollution sources and minimizing the impact these sources have on human health. These guidelines are intended to build on these successes and promote an even more healthy and equitable environment for everyone. Local and state agency staff can use them to promote environment justice wherever possible in local and state government decisions and actions. Agencies are encouraged to incorporate these guidelines into their respective agency policies, programs and procedures.

The Board's Environmental Justice guidelines ask that:

1. All environmental and public health laws and regulations are equitably enforced in all communities.
2. Policymakers use a combination of scientific evidence, traditional knowledge, and public testimony in their decision-making process.
3. Businesses and industry work with community and government agency partners to reduce and prevent pollution when technically feasible.
4. All community members are given an opportunity for meaningful involvement before, during and after a decision-making process, an environmental health action, or a discussion pertaining to the costs and benefits of new development.
5. Government agency priorities, strategic planning efforts, and research agendas be shaped with input from the community.
6. Written and oral communication between a government agency and a community are conducted in the predominant language of that community and in a manner that is culturally appropriate to the community.